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The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

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Volume 1, No. 6

Standard Setting Meetings Are a Success

Dear Readers,

It is that time of year when most schools are getting ready for end of the year activities. But MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program, keeps moving ahead at top speed.



Standard-setting panel member

Since the last issue of *The Assist*, many things have happened. One of the most significant steps that took place was the standard setting meetings. Standard setting is a process used to determine the criteria for calculating a student's performance on each of the Performance Expectations assessed by MI-Access.

The standard setting process was conducted by BETA/TASA—the MI-Access operational contractor—and included more than 75 people, all of whom were nominated by their school districts to participate. The standard setting meetings took place April 8 – 11, 2002 in Lansing. There were two standard setting panels—one for MI-Access Participation and one for MI-Access Supported Independence—that met for two days each. Each panel was comprised of three "sub panels"—one each for ages 9/10, 13/14 and



Standard-setting panel member

17/18. The panel members included Michigan classroom teachers (special and general education), building level administrators, parents, school psychologists, and related support services staff.



Standard-setting panel members

The charge to each of the panels was to recommend to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) "cut scores" for each Performance Expectation by age and MI-Access assessment. The cuts divided either a six- or eight-point scale into three achievement categories—*Surpassed the Performance Standard*, *Attained the Performance Standard*, and *Emerging Toward the Performance Standard*. These

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Education and the U.S. Office of Special
Education.

NOTE: MI-Access Reports Due to Districts August 2002

Originally, the first statewide MI-Access results were scheduled for return to districts in June 2002. That date has been moved to August 2002. The additional weeks will allow adequate time for the MI-Access team to prepare materials needed to understand, interpret, use and disseminate the MI-Access results.

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

Thanks to all of you who shipped your MI-Access materials by the April 12th deadline. Scanning and scoring of the assessments has begun and score reports will be shipped to districts in August.

If for any reason you have not yet returned your used materials, please do so immediately. We cannot complete the reporting process until **all** districts have returned their materials. If you need instructions on how or where to ship the materials, please call the toll-free MI-Access Hotline: 1-888-382-4246.

Plan now for the 2002/2003 assessment season

It's not too early to start thinking about next year's administration of MI-Access.

In August, we will request projections for the number of teachers and students who will be involved in the 2003 MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments, as well as the number of students for whom Determined by IEP Team (not Participation or

Supported Independence) Scan forms will be submitted. Accurate estimates are needed for us to print sufficient quantities of materials.

We will also need updated information about your designated District and School MI-Access Coordinators. Designation Forms will be mailed in August. The earlier you determine who your District and School MI-Access Coordinators will be for the 2002/2003 school year, the more efficient our communication will be.

MI-Access training materials will be shipped to districts in October, prior to the MI-Access Conferences. The MI-Access conferences have once again been scheduled with the assistance of the Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM). In July, you will be able to register online at www.gomiem.org. (See the back of this newsletter for the dates)

If you have any questions or comments, please e-mail them to mi-access@tasa.com.

Standard Setting Meetings

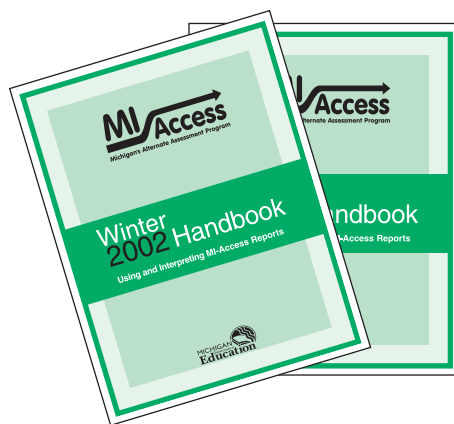
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performance categories will then be used on the MI-Access reports.

I want to thank everyone who participated in the standard setting process. I was impressed with the quality of the conversation, the commitment of the participants, and the true desire to do an excellent and fair job. Based on the evaluations submitted by the panel participants, overall the standard setting meetings were enlightening and effective and as a result will help make the MI-Access



Michael Beck,
BETA President



reports a more useful tool for educators.

Enjoy your summer.

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for Students with Disabilities
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Training Assessment Administrators: The Oakland Schools Example

Michele Harmala, Special Education Consultant, Oakland Schools • Deborah Norton, Teacher Consultant, Rochester Community Schools

Oakland Schools and its constituent districts did a variety of things to prepare teachers across the county for the Winter 2002 implementation of MI-Access. A group of educators worked as a team to develop methods to assist teachers in (1) identifying the students, according to their IEP, who would be assessed using MI-Access, (2) identifying who would administer the assessments, and (3) determining how each teacher would be trained.

For example, Rochester, Clarkston, and Bloomfield Hills all used a similar process. They began by generating a list of students who were special education eligible and the appropriate age or grade for assessment participation (ages 9/10, 13/14, 17/18 and/or the MEAP assessed grades 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11).

The teachers then reviewed Individualized Education Programs (IEP) to identify which students would be assessed with (1) the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), (2) the MEAP with accommodations, (3) Phase 1 MI-Access assessments, or (4) another alternate assessment determined by the IEP Team, such as progress on annual goals and objectives. This information was then recorded on a matrix. In some cases, the IEP Team had to determine the appropriate assessment or had to re-determine the appropriateness of the tool already identified in the IEP. For example, a student whose IEP stated that he/she should be assessed using IEP goals and objectives was instead assessed using MI-Access Supported Independence because the student's

curriculum and instruction was more appropriately aligned to that tool.

Once these decisions were made by the IEP Team, the director of special education recorded the information and provided the completed matrix to each building principal. The matrix was used to order the assessment materials from the MI-Access contractor.

Next, the districts identified the professional staff who would administer the assessment. A team was identified for each student. The team included the case-load teacher as well as appropriate related support service providers. Also, within each building in Rochester, the psychologist was designated as the School MI-Access Coordinator to tap into his or her knowledge, to ensure involvement of all special educators, and to share the workload created by the new assessment.

The building teams were selected to attend training, which would prepare them for administering the assessment. The training was developed through a countywide effort that included directors and supervisors of special education, teachers, and related support service providers. Oakland Schools facilitated the development and preparation of training material. The group incorporated the material provided by the Michigan Department of Education in the November 2001 training to provide participants with (1) an understanding of *Addressing the Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities* (AUEN 3.0), the framework used to develop the MI-Access assessment activities, and (2) to prepare them for administering MI-Access. The training was

delivered in a full-day session, however, staff had the opportunity to attend either the AUEN session, the MI-Access session, or both depending on their prior experience. The training sessions were then set up by geographic location throughout the county and districts provided staff to deliver the training.

Following the training, the school teams met within their buildings to determine how they would approach the assessment. For example, the teams reviewed each Performance Expectation being assessed in the MI-Access assessments along with the AUEN to identify opportunities to assess the student within the normal school day. Observations were then assigned to the teacher or related support service provider who would typically be working with the student during the opportunity identified.

Oakland Schools and the training development team, which includes Rochester, Clarkston, Royal Oak, Farmington, Bloomfield Hills, and Lamphere, met to discuss the training delivery and to develop additional training activities and materials to support the staff in future implementation of MI-Access. The team is planning to provide a full day of AUEN awareness training, and two half-days of training related to implementing MI-Access and possible ways of using MI-Access results for student and program improvement. These sessions will be available to Oakland County staff during the summer of 2002 and again during the early part of the 2002-2003 school year.

DB Central: Michigan Services for Children and Youth Who Are Deaf-Blind

Did you know that there is a resource available for parents and professionals impacted by or working with a child or young adult who is deaf-blind? DB Central is a federally funded grant project that provides consulting services across the state of Michigan. All services are free of charge and are provided in the home or at the school site. The only requirement for obtaining services is that the child or young adult have both a vision and a hearing impairment.

DB Central has four main grant goals:

1. to provide technical assistance/educational consultation to families and professionals,
2. to provide family support,
3. to disseminate information on deaf-blindness, and
4. to conduct an annual census/registry of children—from birth through age twenty-six—who are deaf-blind.

Technical assistance involves an initial visit to the home, school, work site, etc. in order to conduct an observation of regularly scheduled activities. Later on the same day, the consultant meets with the family and staff (at the same time, when possible) to obtain additional information and make suggestions to the team. The recommendations are put into writing and sent to the team as quickly as possible. Subsequent visits

are scheduled as needed and will vary depending on the needs of the team (i.e., the initial visit format is not followed for each subsequent visit).

If the family of a child who qualifies as deaf-blind requests family support, the Family Support Coordinator will arrange a home visit. An interview/assessment is conducted to determine how DB Central can support the family. The Family Support Coordinator will tailor his or her support to the needs of a particular family. Types of support include:

- connecting the family to beneficial resources,
- conducting Personal Futures Planning (in conjunction with the school district or other involved agencies),
- bringing families with similar needs together, and
- hosting an annual Family Retreat for families with children on our census.

DB Central disseminates information through various avenues, including a lending library, a quarterly newsletter, presentations at conferences, and a Web site. The lending library materials are listed on the DB Central site, at www.dbcentral.org. All of the materials center around the needs of children who are deaf-blind and those who serve them. Materials are loaned free of charge for approximately one month at a time. If you are interested in being added to DB Central's mailing list, please contact the project (infor-

mation below). We hope to conduct a series of regional workshops in the near future.

DB Central is also charged with compiling the Annual Federal Registry of Students Who Are Deaf-Blind. The data collected is reported to the United States Department of Education and determines the funding for programs supporting children with dual sensory impairments. DB Central is currently collecting census information. If you know of a child/young adult—from birth through age twenty-six (who is still in school)—please contact the project to register that individual or to see if he or she is already registered. All census information is kept strictly confidential.

DB Central Contact Information:

Beth Kennedy, M.Ed.-
Project Director/Consultant
Patricia Nowak, MSW-
Family Support Coordinator
Marianne McJames-
Administrative Secretary

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So, how did it go?

The first statewide administration of Phase 1 MI-Access assessments is complete. The MDE staff would like to thank all of you who had a part in the assessment process this year either as a trainer, coordinator, or as an assessment administrator.

Now the MDE and the MI-Access contractor have the task of scanning, scoring and reporting the assessment results. A very important part of that task is reviewing and

sharing feedback from those in the field who were involved in the assessment process. Feedback continues to be an essential and valued component of the MI-Access program.

As part of the feedback process, the MI-Access staff would like to invite anyone interested in sharing his/her experiences, comments, or suggestions, to submit an article for a future issue of *The Assist*. If you are interested in doing so, e-mail the MI-Access contractor at mi-access@tasa.com.

New MDE Web site address

Check out special education's
"assessment and accommodations"
www.michigan.gov/mde

NOW We're Talking!

One of the results of including all students in Michigan's statewide assessment system has been new found collaboration among educators. Traditionally, groups within the educational community have not shared information with, nor even had much awareness of or contact with, professionals beyond their own particular discipline. Both federal and state mandates are causing a convergence of professional efforts—especially those involving children with disabilities—toward providing like opportunities for all students.

Accessibility, measurable student progress, inclusion, and assessment are among the many issues being revisited as a result of legislation like IDEA 97.

The article below is an account of one school's efforts to provide more comprehensive educational services and opportunities to its students. The author, teacher Deborah Clark, tells how the staff at her school has combined and coordinated efforts to better provide *all* students successful learning experiences.

special education teacher feels an assignment should be waived or adapted, his or her suggestions as a professional are taken seriously and used. When special needs students are pulled from the regular classroom to test or work on small group assignments, all adults involved are comfortable that the integrity of the class/test/activity remains intact for all students.

4. **Maintain high expectations.**

Learning disabilities should not excuse bright students from achieving. Struggling students can benefit from being prodded to reach beyond minimal expectations. The more educators expect from kids, the more they will learn and gain the respect of their peers.

Making Inclusion Work

Deborah Clark, Teacher, Portland High School

The first week of school found me staring at class lists and wondering how on earth I could meet my goals of challenging all students and leaving no student behind in ninth grade language arts. There they were, 90 freshmen in three classes. Interspersed among the usual motivated, conscientious, and eager 14-year-olds were 15 identified special needs students (EMI, EI, AI, LD), two new Sudanese students, a recent boot camp graduate, and one student on probation.



Deborah Clark

How would we all survive the year and accomplish significant learning? The answer came quickly—we would do it by partnering with our special education staff. Having four adults working together—two teachers and two paraprofessionals—made all the difference.

Together our team has learned there are four things we must do for inclusion to work for our students. We expect our lessons learned may benefit others as well.

1. **Communicate.** Discuss what is happening in class every day and why. Ask questions of each other about individual needs. Can Susie work with Joe? How can I handle Kim's outbursts? How could we modify this assignment for Carl? What alternatives can we use to assess the child with autism's understanding of a literary passage? What mood is Pat in, and how can we help?
2. **Understand the curriculum.** Work together to make appropriate accommodations that meet course standards. Make decisions that are in the best interests of students trying to learn the stated curriculum. Recognize levels of understanding and performance within the curricular activities.
3. **Be honest and trust one another.** When the regular education teacher hands a test to the special education teacher, she or he knows it will not be used merely to spoon-feed answers to students or added to a file of study materials for students to copy. When the

Our success is based on these keys to success, all of which are rooted in an ongoing collaborative process. This includes sharing information among staff members about student needs and abilities as well as assessment data. We approach each student with special needs intending to optimize his or her participation in the same curriculum and educational opportunities that are available to others. Our students with special needs receive instruction that is based on *Michigan's Model Content Standards* contained in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*. And, our students participate in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS). The focus of all this effort comes from communicating with one another, trusting each other, and having high expectations for our students.

As I look back over 2001-2002, I can smile. A team effort involving four adults, all of whom believe in and practice the four keys to success, has resulted in 90 freshman students progressing in their ability to communicate. At the very least we have modeled cooperation, honesty, trust, and the importance of having high expectations. At best we have challenged all of our students and appropriately adapted the curriculum so that every one of them has experienced some measure of success. In my opinion, inclusion works!

Welcome Sheila Potter to the MI-Access Team!

Phase 2 of MI-Access will provide assessment options for those students whose IEP Team determines that it is not appropriate for the student to participate in the MEAP, the MEAP with accommodations, or the current MI-Access assessments (Participation and Supported Independence). The new MI-Access assessment(s) will be aligned with the Michigan



Sheila Potter

Curriculum Framework's Model Content Standards and will use components of the AUEN Functional Independence document as well as other assessment strategies that fit the needs of Michigan students. One of the roles included in the contract with the MI-Access contractor, BETA/TASA, is assisting the Michigan Department of Education in the development of the Phase 2 MI-Access assessments. Sheila Potter—formerly with the Michigan Department of Education's Curriculum Office and now Director of Curriculum Services with BETA/TASA—has taken on the task of facilitating the development and writing of the first draft of the proposed plan or blueprint for Phase 2 assessments. The MI-Access staff is elated to have someone of her caliber and expertise joining the MI-Access team. The article to the right is her update on the progress of the Phase 2 MI-Access proposed assessment plan.

Phase 2 MI-Access Update

Sheila Potter, Director of Curriculum Services, BETA/TASA

Phase 2 of MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program, has been gaining momentum over the past two years. The Phase 2 Content Advisory Committee (CAC) participated in comparing and linking the Michigan Model Content Standards to the AUEN (3.0) Functional Independence document's Performance Expectations. In addition, the MI-Access Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) has been reviewing commercially available assessments and discussing assessment needs with many Michigan and national experts.

In April 2002, a Phase 2 Proposed Assessment Plan Writing Team was established. The team consists of approximately twenty-four knowledgeable, experienced professionals from across the state. Several participants are members of the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC). Others recently participated in setting standards for the Phase 1 MI-Access assessments (Participation and Supported Independence).

The Phase 2 Proposed Assessment Plan Writing Team is charged with defining the student population to be served by Phase 2 assessments and examining other states' alternate assessment formats and procedures. The team also will review the MEAP tests in English language arts and

mathematics and consider how they are aligned to state content standards and benchmarks. The team will then examine the English Language Arts and Mathematics Content Standards and Benchmarks in the Michigan Curriculum Framework to "extend" them to fit the needs of the Phase 2 student population. It will also consider related performance skills (or access skills—as they are called in Ohio) in light of AUEN Functional Independence Performance Expectations. The team's primary task will then be to explore methods of assessing standards and benchmarks in ways that are appropriate for Michigan's Phase 2 student group.

The projected goal is to prepare a draft proposed assessment plan by August 1, in order to have a statewide field review and comment during the fall of 2002. A very rigorous work schedule has been planned to meet this completion date. There will be a number of all-day team meetings as well as a three-day retreat. Through this process the team will incorporate many views and strategies into an approach that best meets the needs of Michigan's Phase 2 students. The MI-Access staff is fortunate to have such dedicated people volunteer for this challenging work, and we look forward to reporting more on Phase 2 developments in upcoming issues of *The Assist*.

IDEAS TIPS SUGGESTIONS

If you have ideas, suggestions, or tips you would like to see included in *The Assist*, send them to mi-access@tasa.com.

Mark Your Calendars Now

If you still have questions about how to determine "as expected," or are not quite sure what "prompting" means, you will have an opportunity this fall to continue learning and talking with the MDE and your peers about MI-Access.

Four MI-Access Annual Fall Conferences have been scheduled around the state. So, pick the one nearest you and put it on your calendar now. Following are the dates and locations from which you can choose.

- Friday, October 18, at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing

- Thursday, October 24, at the Crowne Plaza in Grand Rapids
- Thursday, October 31, at the Holiday Inn in Livonia (costumes encouraged)
- Thursday, November 7, at Treetops in Gaylord

The registration fee is \$75 and includes SB-CEU credits, a conference binder and materials, a continental breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM) is working with the MDE to organize the conferences, so look for a registration flyer from them towards the end of June. In July, you will be able to register online at www.gomiem.org.



Kudos and Thanks to Midland!

As you all probably know by now, Phase 2 of MI-Access involves the development of an assessment (or assessments) for students not taking part in the MEAP, MI-Access Participation or MI-Access Supported Independence. The MI-Access Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) has been reviewing programs and test materials and discussing possible assessment approaches for this very diverse student group.

At its most recent meeting, committee members took to the road to get an even better understanding of this unique student population. Despite a severe March storm, the committee traveled to Midland for a tour of Special Education classrooms in Midland Public Schools. The tour was hosted by Jeff Hall, Supervisor of Special Services, and middle school teachers Larry Timm (an AAAC member) and Bonnie Hommel.

AAAC members were given a brief history of Midland's program, local curriculum innovations, and areas of content emphasis. The members then had the opportunity to watch—and participate—as Larry Timm and Bonnie Hommel led students through a variety of classroom activities. The students demonstrated skills and enthusiasm that

both impressed and surprised the visitors. Students even bested the visitors in mathematics drills and knowledge of insects. Students also amazed the visiting committee by demonstrating their knowledge of computer hardware and assembly, and demonstrated a remarkable understanding of house construction by showing how to install electrical circuits in a full-scale mockup of a home construction project.



Through it all, students were both friendly and proud as they showed visitors what they could do and what they had learned in school. The visit showed committee members what is possible when high expectations, hard work, and professional collaboration come together to drive student success.

After the school visit the committee met to review a sampling of assessment materials used in Midland and other areas of the state. Discussion ensued about how what the members had seen that day could help future planning for the Phase 2 assessment. It was certainly an informative and much appreciated experience for committee members.

Thanks to our many hosts—the students and staff in Midland!

GLOSSARY



Performance Standard – A statement or description that may be used to guide judgments about the location of a cut score on a score scale. The term often implies a desired level of performance.

Standard setting – A judgment process using expert judges to determine a specific point on a scale as a frame of reference for interpreting test scores ("How good is good?").

Cut score – A specific point on a score scale, such that scores at or above that point are interpreted or acted upon differently from the scores below that point. (*Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, 1999*).

Phase 2 MI-Access – This new phase will provide assessment options for those students whose IEP Team determines that it is not appropriate for the student to participate in the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, or the current MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments.

MEAS – State Board of Education approved Michigan Educational Assessment System comprised of the three state assessments: MEAP, MI-Access and ELL-Access.

Important MI-Access Dates

2002 assessment results will be shipped starting August 9

MI-Access Training Materials to Districts

Week of October 1, 2002

MI-Access Conferences

October 18 – East Lansing @ Kellogg Center

October 24 – Grand Rapids @ Crowne Plaza Hotel

October 31 – Livonia @Holiday Inn

November 7 – Gaylord @TreeTops

MI-Access District Coordinator Teleconference

January 21, 22 or 23, 2003

2003 Assessment Window

February 17 thru March 31, 2003

**Ship MI-Access Assessment Materials to BETA/TASA
by April 11, 2003**



Bookmark these Web sites:

IDEA information – www.ideapractices.org

National Staff Development Council –
www.nsdc.org

MEAP – www.meritaward.state.mi.us

New MDE Web site – www.michigan.gov/mde

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, SEAC, Special education monitors, MDE staff, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. The Assist may also be downloaded from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services section of the MDE Web site www.michigan.gov/mde.



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